YOUNG DAYS.

MOTHER MOUSE (see page 130).

No. 167.—November, 1889. Vol. XIV.

CONRAD OF ORLBURG.

BY N. BARROWCLIFFE.

CHAPTER XIII.

RECOGNITION.

STEPHEN was still full of resources and obstinate to the last. He tried every sort of manœuvre to gain time, giving up his prisoners, among others.

As Conrad and his companions reached the door they were arrested by a message to Conrad from Stephen, begging to speak with him for only one minute, he had something of the utmost importance to say to him. Karl begged him not to go, saying it was only one more invention to save himself. But Stephen's entreaties were so urgent, and it was so likely to be the last time he should see him, that Conrad would not refuse, and laying his almost lifeless charge in Karl's arms for a moment, he stepped back.

Stephen met him with the utmost eagerness.

"Ah, I knew you would hear me; you will never regret it——."

"You must be brief," interposed Conrad, glancing back at his escort.

"Yes, yes, only come aside, I won't detain you. It is all up with me, I am lost! Only listen to one word." He drew Conrad aside, and went on in a low rapid voice. "You still cling to Count Henry; now in his ruin you have not given him up. Listen to what I say, and see if he is worthy of your devotion, whether he or I most deserve your gratitude! He has a secret, I alone knew it, and alone know the whole of it still. It is the knowledge of part of it has drawn these men to me; the knowledge of part of it might have drawn Thorwald and the whole country to me; but you, you stood in the way! To you alone I would have told it long ago, but you would not! But to you now I will tell it, before I die. You know that Conrad of Orlburg's name is forbidden; you know that when he lived Henry was his steward; you know that Henry was raised to the highest honours by Conrad the Count, and married to his young sister, Blanche. You know that Conrad went to the war and was killed, that his young Countess died of grief, that her orphaned child was left in the care of Henry and Blanche, that Henry then tried to make himself Count, but the people rose against him in support of Conrad's little heir; that the little heir suddenly disappeared and was heard of no more, and Henry hired ruffian bands and forced Orlburg to submit to him. It was believed that the child died a natural death. But I alone knew what became of it. Henry, finding that it alone stood between him and the crown, condemned it to death. Do not start, do not shudder! it did not die—I saved it; he granted its life to me, and concealed it in slavery, hoping that through hardship it would perish. But it did not perish; again I saved and rescued it from oblivion, and the child is alive now!"

Conrad started violently, and Stephen cried:

"Ah, do you see? do you understand? Now say if I do not deserve your gratitude more than Henry! You, *you* are that child, the son of Conrad of Orlburg, the wronged heir of this land——"

Conrad, leaping up, flung off the grasp Stephen had laid upon him. In his heart was no feeling but that of indignation, of disbelief, of scorn and anger; he cried out, with flashing eyes and heaving breast, "Wretched man! it is not the first falsehood you have told me!"

"But it is true," shrieked Stephen; "believe it, and save yourself and us all! I will lead you to the Orlburgers, they will hail you as their chief; the cruel Henry will be no more——"

"Silence," cried Conrad, "you are not worthy to speak of Henry's sins! Consider your own and the punishment that is coming upon them!"

Stephen flung himself on his knees, but Conrad was gone, across the court, over the bridge, and stopped not till he reached the gates. There he took his little charge once more into his arms, and looked down at the dim blue eyes and tangled golden hair, and felt the little hands cling about him with their last strength; and bearing him into safety, thought no more of Stephen. His only thought was, whether the rescue had not come too late.

But they were safe! And the camp was such a harbour of refuge! Part of the Court was there, and Lady Hilda, Prince George's mother, a lady noble, kind, and beautiful. She took the poor children of the fallen Count into her care. With every kindness, ease, and comfort the sinking life was revived in the breast of the little lord, and before very long the anxious fears for him were allayed, and he was safe on the road to recovery.

Another load was thus lifted from Conrad's mind, and he began to look himself again. He was welcomed with warm congratulations by Prince George, who was in the camp distinguishing himself by brilliant actions. He had formed a company of knights errant, who had been in

all the battles affording help to those that wanted it. The attack was now turned to Robert's Tower. After the last storming of the Castle, all who escaped flew to the Tower for refuge; Stephen also tried to make his escape, but he was killed in the attempt. All the Prince's strength, therefore, was now turned towards the Tower, and George was bent with more than usual eagerness on the rescue of the Countess and Lady Madeleine.

"You and I," he said to Conrad, "and you, Karl, we will go together."

Conrad, however, did not go; he was otherwise employed. He listened to the rumours which were all round him, against Count Henry, dark and contradictory; some alleged that he had murdered the whole of the family of Conrad of Orlburg, others that they were not in reality dead, but concealed in some mysterious and dreadful way. All combined in the outcry against him, and the Prince of Nurnberg was called by unanimous consent to take the country into his own hands, and to call Henry before his accusers to give his answer. Conrad heard all; he could not tell what was truth and what falsehood; but, through all, his heart and faith still clung to his fallen lord.

Robert, under the persuasion of Abbot Raymond, soon surrendered the Tower; the rest of the prisoners were free, and the poor Countess restored to her children, and Raymond was made the leader of all the Orlburgers. Conrad, though anxious to see Lady Madeleine safe under the protection of Prince George, yet rather stole away to meet the returning Count, determined that he should not enter quite friendless.

He met him, solitary, defenceless, changed and broken, and the meeting was a very sad one on both sides. Conrad conducted him towards the entrance in silence, but Henry, looking at him with something of his old eagle glance, said:

"Then I have still one to attend upon me! Who are you that come to a ruined lord? I have nothing now to offer any servant!"

Conrad bent his knee and burst into tears; and Henry stopped to look at him with a grave and softening face, and said:

"Conrad, you have grown and prospered under your new masters."

"My lord, I have still no master but you; and if I have grown it has not been in luxury, but on prison fare. There are yet a few who have suffered for your sake, and would willingly have suffered more if they could have served you. But you are blessed yet, my lord, for your children are safe."

Henry covered his face with his hands, and remained for a long time in thought. He spoke to Conrad more sadly, but also more gently than Conrad had ever heard him; and at last, he said, in a voice shaken with remorse:

"If I had been served from the first by such as you, instead of by such as Stephen, ah, Conrad, how different might all things have been."

Others approached them, and Henry saw that he was not to enter alone. A horseman came up first, whose monkish garb over his armour told him to be no other than the Abbot Raymond. But beneath the cloak his manly frame seemed to have recovered youth and the uses of knighthood; his arms became him with an easy grace, and his noble face shone out with the spirit of a warrior rather than a recluse.

Conrad looked with admiration and yet grief at this transformation in the holy father he had adored so long. But as for Henry, how strangely the sight affected him! He started and stared, and looked again, with a changing countenance, as if something supernatural appeared to him in Raymond's lineaments, and seemed bewildered as in a dream.

But Raymond told the news that his wife was safe and her children restored to her, and welcomed Henry to meet them, and they passed on, both deeply absorbed. And in a short time his happy wife and children were in Henry's arms.

CHAPTER XIV.

HENRY'S CONFESSION.

THE poor Countess flew from her husband to Conrad, crying that he was the saviour of her children, and she was ready to embrace, not him only, but everyone all round. The children, between their mother and father, Conrad, and their new friends, knew not where to turn, until they partly solved the problem by following their mother wherever she went, and dragging Conrad behind them. Madeleine looked so beautiful, paled with her imprisonment, but now radiant with joy, that Conrad could scarcely take his eyes off her. She welcomed him with both hands out and tears of pleasure in her eyes, and he was rewarded for all he had suffered by the praises she gave him, calling him brave and faithful, saying he deserved to have a name among knights, and had fulfilled her high hopes of him. Prince George was as warm as she, and with instinctive kindness tried to withdraw himself that Conrad might have his place by her side, but Conrad was far too modest to take it from him. Very gay looked the courts and walls

of the castle, with bright tents, flags, and banners, lances and chargers, heralds and knights crowding about them, and still gayer the castle hall, once more decked and filled, Lady Hilda of Nurnberg enthroned at one end, with Lady Blanche beside, her children playing at her feet, and Madeleine bright and lovely amongst her maidens.

Henry was not treated like a criminal, or even like a prisoner; the sight of his humiliation seemed to diffuse a sort of respect and pity throughout the camp, though all held aloof and looked askance at him. But he scarcely seemed to concern himself with what passed, so absent was he and utterly absorbed. Raymond, on the other hand, looked disturbed and agitated, and unlike himself. Robert the Bear had come in, and was now quite quiet and submissive, and making friends all round.

Towards evening the chiefs assembled, and only waited the Prince to begin their Council. At length the Prince entered. Henry, who had been absorbed, and did not even notice the Prince's entrance, suddenly called his children to him, and drew Ferdy on his knee.

"Do you know, my son," said he, "that your inheritance is gone, that this castle is not ours, that all my people have cast me off, and that our good name is lost, and we are to be homeless exiles?"

"Yes," said Ferdy, in a solemn tone, while the Prince and the others paused to listen.

"Tell me," said Henry, "if you had a voice in the fate of your lost lordship, if you might dispose of it at your pleasure, who would you give it to?"

Ferdy hesitated, but Christy, glancing his bright eye round the room, leapt up and shouted—

"I know; give it to Conrad!"

"Yes," assented Ferdy, with an affectionate look, "I would give it to Conrad."

Henry smiled, stroked the boy's head, and turned to the company. After a silence of some minutes, he rose with a resolute air and approached the Abbot Raymond. It seemed that before the Council began it was to be preceded by some scene between these two, who had been puzzling everyone by their strange looks. Could it be that they had some secret between them? The Prince and all the others determined to wait their time, and see first to what this affair would lead.

Henry, who seemed to be following some train of action which he had set himself, laid his hand on Raymond's arm, and began by asking in a low voice this strange question—

"Tell me, Raymond, did you ever see our young Countess, the wife of Conrad of Orlburg, in the days when she ruled in these halls?"

Raymond had started at his first address, and seemed as if on his guard, but when he heard the question his whole aspect changed; he seemed to be thrown back from the present into scenes long passed away, and his face became absorbed in the very deepest sadness; his head bowed, and when he answered it was in a tone as low as Henry's—

"I saw her. She was the most beautiful, noblest, and best beloved lady that ever trod this earth, and never had lady so sad a fate."

"Now, tell me one more thing," said Henry. "Does it never strike you that that boy," he pointed to Conrad, but kept his eyes fixed on Raymond's face, "that that boy is strangely like her?"

Raymond started, and looked hard upon Henry.

"If," continued Henry, "her little son had lived—that son I had the care of, that son that was believed to have died, and that people now accuse me of having murdered—if he had lived, would he not now have been just such a boy as that?"

Raymond strode forward towards Conrad, then turned on Henry almost fiercely, then again towards Conrad; and while he looked he seemed to forget himself and where he was, and as if his whole soul were bent upon that gaze, while all through the room a breathless expectation prevailed. Then, making a great effort to speak, he reeled, and had almost fallen.

"Come," said Henry, grasping his arm, "be a holy father yet once more, for I have a confession to make to you. If your highness," turning to the Prince, "will allow me a few minutes, you and all this company shall be satisfied."

He moved towards the door, and Raymond followed mechanically, still looking behind him, and they left the room together.

And upon all those left behind seemed to burst as with lightning flashes the truth of all the mysteries they had been involved in, and in a whirl of discovery and conjecture the story was put together; but the door burst open, and all was stopped by one cry of "Conrad, where is Conrad!"

Then followed confused sounds. "Bring him to his father; let him come and hear his story!" And the bewildered boy found himself in the midst of the crowd, hurried along he knew not whither, till he was arrested by Henry's grasp.

"Conrad," said Henry, hoarse and pale, "all Stephen told you was true. The son of Conrad

of Orlburg lives, and you are he. Stephen and I have lived all these years with the weight on our minds of falsehood and usurpation. Stephen's was the most blame, but he has gone to his account. It was at his suggestion that the heir of my master was made away with, but it was also at his suggestion that his life was spared. But it was not for mercy; Stephen served his own purpose in that as in all else; he meant to attach you to himself, and then to make use of you against me. Enough! There is another thing which was unknown both to me and Stephen; the Count is himself alive, Conrad of Orlburg, and has been among us for years, unknown. The Abbot Raymond was no monk, but Conrad himself; you are his son—and your father waits you!"

As he ceased he fell almost insensible upon a seat. Conrad knew not what he heard or saw, but he felt that the Abbot strode through the crowd with open arms straight to him, he felt a face beam down on him with parental love, he dimly heard a voice say, "My son," and knew that he was clasped to his father's heart.

(*To be continued.*)

WOMEN OF THE BIBLE.

Jepthah's Daughter.

THE Israelites being sorely beset by their enemies the Ammonites, and feeling that only a very powerful leader could help them, appealed to Jepthah, the son of Gilead. Some time before he had been turned out of his father's house by his half-brothers, and in his bitterness of heart had taken to a wild and lawless life, and had in his continual wanderings gained much knowledge of the surrounding tribes, and this the Israelites now felt would be very useful to them.

Jepthah accepted the offer to become their leader, after obtaining a promise from them that if successful he should be made Chief of Gilead. He then, after sending a peaceful message to the Ammonite king without avail, prepared to lead the Israelites to battle, but before starting he took a solemn vow and said, "Lord, if Thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be that whatever cometh forth from the doors of my house to meet me on my return it shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering." In this way he thought to enlist the help of Jehovah.

Then he started for the battle, and after much slaughter he was successful, and returned home proud of his victory, and of the glory and honour before him as the head of the tribe of Gilead. Perhaps he had for the time forgotten his vow, or at any rate it did not cause him any anxiety, till on reaching his own house, surrounded by his chief officers, he saw coming joyfully to meet him, playing on her timbrel, with a bright, happy, eager look on her fair young face, his dear and only daughter.

Then he remembered his awful vow to sacrifice "whatsoever cometh forth from the doors of my house to meet me." There was no escape, no putting some one else in her place; she stood alone.

Ever since she had heard of the victory she had been looking forward to this hour when she should go forth to meet her father; the house had been put in order, the hospitable meal prepared, she had dressed herself with extra care in the things her father loved the best, and the instant she saw him drawing near she had run

out eagerly to be the first to welcome him home, sure of the loving greeting she would get.

But what is this? why does her father grow so suddenly pale? why does he turn from her? For one moment she looks inquiringly round on the assembled warriors, but she sees only sad, pitying looks; no one speaks, till at last Jepthah turns and tells her of his vow.

What does she do? does she begin to weep and beg him to spare her and to find some other sacrifice? No! no thought of such a thing enters the mind of the Hebrew maiden; she stands for one moment horror-struck, and then, while her maidens sink weeping to the ground, and even strong men can scarce keep back their tears, she steps calmly and bravely up to her father and says, "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which has proceeded out of thy mouth."

One favour only she begs of him, that he will give her two months, that with her young companions she may bewail her cruel fate, and prepare herself to meet it calmly. The request was granted only too gladly; to postpone the dreaded day for only two months was some relief to the wretched father. And she and her companions went up into the mountains to wait and pray. Can we not imagine how they hoped that something would come to save her before the time was up, how sad and heavy their hearts grew as day after day passed and still no help, till at last the end came and she must go? Taking a sad, loving farewell of her dear companions, she went forth to her father ready to accept death at his hands, since such—as she, poor child, believed—was the will of the Lord.

And Jepthah met her, and having kissed her and blessed her, "did unto her according to his vow," not understanding even to the last that the breaking of his cruel, wicked vow, and the humble admission of his sin in making it, would have been far more acceptable to God than its fulfilment.

The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,
A maiden pure; as when she went along
From Mizpeh's towered gate with welcome light,
With timbrel and with song.

My words leapt forth, "Heaven heads the count of crimes
With that wild oath." She rendered answer high:
"Not so, nor once alone; a thousand times
I would be born and die.

"It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father's will;
Because the kiss he gave me ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still."

—*From Tennyson's "Dream of Fair Women."*

E. J. T.

SNIP:

An Old Story of an Old Tailor.

PART I.

IN one of the narrowest and dirtiest alleys of a certain great city stood a very tall old house, so begrimed with smoke and dirt, that whether it was built of brick, wood, or stone, the most curious could not decide; and up a great many flights of rickety stairs, in the topmost story or garret of this gloomy old house, lived a miserable tailor, whom we shall call Master Snip, which is as good a name as any, and one that many a man of the same trade has borne besides.

Master Snip, then, the tailor, lived after a fashion in this lofty abode, with no better companions than the rats, who often visited him in a neighbourly way to beg a crumb or two. But as the tailor's larder was very poorly supplied, the rats would soon have grown as thin as himself, had they depended on his supplies, which in truth they did not, as the fearful onslaughts upon certain great cheeses in some well-filled dairies in the neighbourhood could abundantly testify.

Poor Master Snip had but little to do in the way of employment at his trade, and so he amused himself peeping from his high window down into the houses which stood upon the main street, feasting his eyes upon the goodly display of viands which were each day there served up in the most tempting manner, and making himself acquainted with the various professions and habits of the fortunate dwellers therein. In this manner he may be said to have looked down upon his neighbours.

But the particular feelings with which Master Snip looked down upon these people, whose indoor economy he so eagerly studied, were very far from being scornful or contemptuous. His first peep came from idleness; his next, curiosity; his third, envy; and then covetousness crept into his heart.

"How comes it," he soliloquised, "that some are made rich and others poor without any fault of their own? Here I may starve to death on a crust in this garret, while my neighbour feasts on rich food in an elegant home. These things are not right. If I could only grow rich now! Yes, and rich I would be if I only knew how to begin."

This train of thoughts often filled the poor tailor's mind; and once, as he sat indulging them in the twilight, he suddenly heard a voice in

reply. It came from his old goose (which is, as you may know, the tailor's pressing iron).

"I will make you rich," said the goose, "if you use me well; I will lay you a golden egg every week."

"You, indeed!" retorted the tailor, in a contemptuous tone. "What are you but a bit of iron? *You* lay golden eggs! I should like to see them."

"So I thought," answered the voice, dryly; "but if I rest here idle on the workboard for ever, no golden eggs will you ever see."

"And here am I rusting in the patch," cried a sharp little voice, which the tailor knew was the needle's, "when, if you would but use me well, I would spin you golden thread enough to weave a whole coat, finer than any of your neighbours'."

"Did I ever hear such nonsense!" returned Master Snip, with a jeering laugh; "why, you are nothing but an insignificant needle, and a short one at that; and you have but one eye besides; *you* spin golden thread! what a joke!"

The needle, who rather prided herself upon her abilities, felt quite indignant at this.

"You will find my one eye of more use than your two," she replied, sharply, "if you do nothing else with them than just to stare at your neighbours."

The tailor was meditating a cutting reply to this remark, when he suddenly found himself tumbling off the rickety three-legged stool whereon he was perched; and upon recovering himself, the idea of the goose or the needle holding up a conversation seemed so absurd that he laughed aloud at his own conceit, and concluded he had been dreaming.

The next morning, however, finding the closet empty, and not a crumb left for breakfast, Master Snip produced his last remaining piece of work, and thrusting the goose in the stove, threaded his needle, and began to stitch hurriedly away, anxious to prove the truth of his vision.

But, alas! the eager tailor pulled his thread so hard that it snapped continually, till at last he threw down the needle in a rage, and snatching up the goose (which, if it had not been iron, would surely have been roasted to a crisp), he assayed to press the seam, but burnt his cloth in the endeavour!

Then the poor tailor flung aside the goose in mingled rage and despair.

"This comes of listening to idle babblers," he cried, "or believing in dreams; it is I who am the goose now."

So he suffered the iron to cool on the spot where he threw it, and the needle to remain partly stuck up in the patch, while he resumed his favourite position at the window.

How many hours passed in this way, the tailor himself never knew, for he had become so used to going hungry that the sight of his neighbours' viands seemed like a meal to him, as he allowed himself to imagine all he would say and do, were he in their place. But at last he was recalled to realities by a low tap at the door, and without waiting a response, a little figure opened it, and walked in.

The tailor jumped down from his seat in the window, and confronted his visitor.

He was little and old, with restless eyes that seemed like living coals as they turned searchingly towards every corner of the miserable garret. His face was yellow as gold, and crossed with a perfect network of wrinkles; and his whole countenance wore a pinched and starved look, not unlike the tailor himself.

"Will you put a stitch in my coat, friend?" he said, in a grating, husky voice, "just out of charity, for I am very poor;" and he displayed a shockingly tattered old coat as he spoke.

"Charity and poor, forsooth!" returned the tailor, scoffingly. "Who is poorer or more in need of charity than myself? No, no, friend; charity don't buy bread. I work for money."

"Money!" said the stranger, with a sudden lighting up of the eyes like a flame. "Do you love gold better than charity? Will you turn a beggar from your door unaided because he has not means to buy a kindness?"

"I love not beggars," retorted the tailor, gloomily, for the fiery flash of the old man's eyes seemed to burn into his heart. "I love not beggars, seeing I am one myself; neither love I charity, for it reaches me not here in my high abode. I am above such weaknesses of men; therefore get thee gone, old man, or give me gold—red, shining gold. This I love better than mercy—better than life; for what is life without it? Gold, give me gold!" and he clutched the empty air, as he spoke, with a frenzied grasp.

The old man fixed his searching eyes upon the tailor's excited face: he neither besought his pity nor turned to go away.

"I like you well," he said at last. "Now sew my coat; see, here is the gold you covet, and more shall follow."

To the infinite surprise of the tailor, the strange old man produced a piece of gold from his pocket, and held it temptingly displayed upon his palm.

The tailor's eyes glistened at the sight.

"So you are not a beggar, after all," he said. "Who are you, then?"

"Men call me by many names," replied the other, with a low, mocking laugh; "but my title matters little to you if I prove a good master and pay you well in gold. Come, let me judge of your work; and here is your price."

Mechanically Master Snip hunted up the neglected needle and shears. He was puzzled and bewildered by this strange adventure, and gave himself a sly pinch to make sure he was awake; for he thought it might be but a vision, like that of the needle and goose.

The stranger's torn coat was soon neatly repaired, and the piece of gold slipped into the palm of the expectant tailor, who turned it over and over with a delighted gaze. It was not a joyous look of relief from present want, however, that gleamed from the tailor's eyes, but a gloating, fond expression, that said, as plain as eyes could speak—

"I have got you at last, and mean to keep you."

This look was not lost upon the stranger, who said, while an odd smile wrinkled about his mouth—

"Well, and what use will you make of the gold, friend Snip? buy bread, I suppose?"

With his eyes still fixed thoughtfully upon the piece of money, the tailor replied—

"I will keep it. The sight of gold gladdens my heart, and I forget hunger. No, no; this shining face shall bring good company yet: he will make sweet music as he chinks against another. Ah! methinks I can already hear the sound."

"The chink of gold is sweet to your ears," said the queer little man. "Good! you shall have plenty. Know me as the lord of a rich domain, the master of many servants. You shall make all their livery. What say you?"

Master Snip looked up with an incredulous air: he doubted the words of the stranger; but poor as he looked, he had already paid one gold piece, and might not others follow?

His visitor seemed to divine his thoughts, and his yellow face brightened as he continued—

"I will send one of my servants to-morrow with a coat to be made, Master Snip; and if your work pleases me, I will mind and keep my word: we shall see. You will own me yet for your master; and the price that is paid shall be gold—hard, shining gold."

With a chuckling laugh the old man turned and left the garret as he spoke.

Nothing but a piece of gold that yet rested in his palm could convince Master Snip that all which had passed was not a dream—a vision sent to cheat him; but there was no denying the reality of the piece itself. He rung it on the work-board; he chinked it against the goose (in want of a better metal); he tasted it to be sure it contained no brass; he dropped it in his pocket and tried to forget it was there; and then jerked it out suddenly, almost expecting to find it changed into a gingernut, as he had heard fairy gold was apt to be.

But this was no fairy gold—no antique coin dug up from a buried treasure long hidden in the earth. It was respectable, new, shining gold, bearing date the year before, and with all due and lawful signs of the Mint upon it.

Master Snip had better employment now than watching his neighbours; his golden dreams had at least a foundation, and he devised a thousand ways of giving his solitary treasure a companion. Among all his hopes and plans the queer old stranger's promise was not forgotten; and when the tailor at last lay down to sleep, his newly obtained treasure was hidden next his heart, and filled his mind with wild, vague dreams.

"WYNDLESHORA"—

"Thy forests, Windsor, and thy green retreats"—

AS we are told the Saxons called our modern Windsor, from the winding shores of the flowing river Thames. The Confessor bestowed it on the monks of Westminster, but the Conqueror, admiring the beauty of its situation, its matchless woods and waters, exchanged it for two Essex manors, and here at once began building a castle or hunting seat, in which he soon kept court, and which was the principal residence of many a British Sovereign, from Henry VI. to Victoria, each in turn altering and beautifying and adding, even to the days of George IV., whose architect, Wyatt, was knighted for the various improvements he had effected.

In feudal times the Castle was zealously guarded from the "common people;" now the State Apartments are open, to all who care to visit them, on four days a week—Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. I shall only have space here to give you a general sketch of the whole; for the rest I hope you may visit and see for yourselves.

The terminus of the Great Western is in Datchet Road, and from it pour holiday crowds of excursionists from all parts, pressing along towards the Castle Hill. Of old, kings and queens have ridden this way, in gilded litters or on

champing steeds—Henry I. to be married to Adeliza, Henry III. to found the Order of the Garter, and the ill-fated Anne Boleyn to greet the wilful monarch whose will was law. What says the historian of her entry, contrasting so strangely with the private entrance for the convenience of our present Queen? "Immediately behind Sir Thomas Boleyn came a sumptuous litter, covered with cloth of gold, drawn by four white palfreys, caparisoned in white damask down to the ground, each having a page in white and blue satin at its head. Over the litter was borne a canopy of cloth of gold, supported by four gilt staves, and ornamented at the corners with silver bells, ringing forth sweet music as it moved along. Each staff was borne by a knight, of whom sixteen were in attendance, to relieve each other when fatigued. In this litter sat Anne Boleyn. She wore a surcoat of white tissue, and a mantle of the same material, lined with ermine. Her gown, now concealed by the surcoat, was of cloth of gold tissue, raised with pearls of silver damask, with a stomacher of purple, gold, and large open sleeves; around her neck a chain of orient pearls, from which hung a diamond cross; a black velvet cap, richly embroidered with pearls and jewels, and ornamented by a small white plume, covered her head; even to her tiny feet she was bejewelled, for they were hidden in velvet boots, decorated with diamond stars—no brighter than the large, witching blue eyes that had subdued the royal tiger awaiting her arrival. Loud shouted the crowd; caps were thrown, and a piece of ordnance was fired from the barge, to be answered by the Castle guns. Having paid his homage to Anne Boleyn, the Mayor, in golden chain and gown of crimson velvet, rejoined his gay company of burgesses, and so on to Windsor, where high over the Castle floated the Royal Standard of England. In its shadow advanced a long procession—lords, knights, esquires, and towering over all the portly presence of Henry VIII., who in his thirty-eighth year was still of most royal presence, active, and of noble proportions. He entered Windsor amid the acclamations of the spectators, the blare of trumpets, and the roar of ordnance from the Castle walls, and rode on eagerly to the lower ward, where the Lady Anne stood awaiting his arrival.

"'Fair mistress,' cried the royal wooer, eagerly taking her hand as she advanced to meet him, 'I welcome you to this my Castle of Windsor, and trust soon to make you as absolute mistress of it as I am lord and master.'

"Then, amid long trumpetings and shouts, he led her through the gateway, followed by a glittering train of lords and ladies in waiting, and presently he led her to the Presence Chamber, past the splendid Cardinals Wolsey and Campegio, past his gay courtiers, on to the upper end, where he placed her in the gilded seat hitherto that of his as yet lawful Queen—Catharine of Aragon."

But from the past to the present: from countess to every-day excursionists.

'Tis but a short walk from the railway to the Castle, proudly perched on its chalky eminence, and we are not detained by many objects of interest though we may linger before the Town Hall, built from Sir Christopher Wren's design two hundred years ago; or the parish church, in the High Street, in which is a peal of eight bells, on which is inscribed—

"I and my seven sisters here
Were given by the Cofferer;
And if you wish my name to know,
My elder sister will you show."

"Lord Magham, Cofferer to Queen Anne, gave these two bells and new cast the other six in the year 1707."

We next ascend the Castle Hill, and reach Henry VIII. Gateway. Four towers are here, one of which, the Curfew Tower, was in old times a prison, as many names scratched on its walls attest. Soon we come to the beautifully decorated St. George's Chapel, begun by Edward IV., and rich in emblems of the Knights of the Garter—helmets, banners, and insignia. A stone in the centre bears the name of Henry VIII. and his third wife, Jane Seymour. Here, too, lies Charles I., and in a second vault many other princes, for this ground is rich with royal dust. There are several other chapels hereabouts, which it would take too long to describe, as would the Horseshoe Cloisters, the Deanery, and the Hundred Steps near by; though I must mention that in the Braye Chapel is the memorial to the young Prince Imperial of France, whose marble figure lies with its uncovered head on cushions, all embroidered with bees, the badge of the Napoleons, and its crossed hands clasping an unsheathed sword. The huge Round Tower, or Castle Keep, a view from which commands twelve counties, and on a clear day a view of St. Paul's, was once called "la Rose." Raised by Edward III., it has been the prison of many an historic character—King John of France, David of Scotland, Earl Surrey, Lauderdale, and others. In the tiny garden at its foot King James of Scotland first saw the Lady Jane whom he was to celebrate in verse and afterwards to wed.

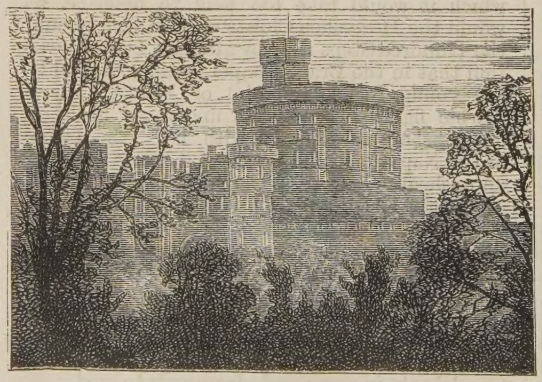
East and north of the Castle lies the Home Park, some four miles in circumference. At one end of the North Terrace are the Slopes, a favourite walk of Her Majesty, and hence a path, leading to the Royal farm and dairy and the kennels. Not far off stood a scathed tree, known as "Herne's Oak."

"There is an old tale goes that Herne the hunter,
Some time a keeper here in Windsor Forest,
Doth all the winter time, at still midnight,
Walk round about this oak."

So we may read in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," and so we might have read upon the trunk of the ancient tree itself, said to be 650 years old, up to August, 1863, when it was blown down; and the Queen, in order to perpetuate its existence to future ages, commanded its remains to be distributed, reserving only a few pieces for herself, and planting a young oak on its site.

There is another interesting tree, called Luther's Beech, to be seen in the enclosure about Adelaide Cottage. It is raised from a slip of the very beech near Altenstein under which Martin Luther was arrested in 1521. The Great Park, fourteen miles in circumference, gives lovely peeps of rural scenery, of deer, and hart, and Cashmere goats, shadowed by ancient beeches and oaks. One avenue of over 1,000 trees stretches from the Grand Entrance to the statue of George III. At three miles' distance, by this "Long Walk," we can reach the lovely Virginia Water, which I would advise all visitors not to miss.

C. L. Matéaux.



THE MOTHER-MOUSE.

A True Story.

On a sultry August morning
It happened once to me
To wander in a garden fair,
That lay beside the sea.

Within that garden, bright with flowers,
A smooth turf lawn was laid,
Soft to the foot, green to the eye,
And lacking only shade.

But close at hand a gravel path
Beneath some beech-trees wound,
And there that sultry summer day
A pleasant seat I found.

Slowly the white-sailed vessels passed,
On outward voyage bound;
The sea-gulls floated on the waves,
And silence reigned around.

How beautiful the garden looked,
So lonely, yet so bright,
The trees, and flowers, and distant sea
All bathed in golden light.

Suddenly, close beside my chair,
A little sound I heard,
A scratch upon the gravel-walk,
As of a mouse or bird.

I turned to look, and on the path
A wondrous sight I see!
A little mouse, and in her mouth
Another, still more wee!

Softly she creeps upon her way,
And when her journey's done
In a hole beside the grassy verge
She lays her little one.

Then back across the path again
The careful mother stole,
And I saw her take another child
Into the new-found hole.

And so, at last, from side to side
I saw her carry five
Sweet little mice, her own dear brood,
Long-tailed and all alive.

She never wearied in her work,
Yet, oh, so small was she!
And thus that sultry summer day
She moved her family.

Dear mother mouse! some thoughtless one
May chance this rhyme to read,
And learn to love your gentle race,
On hearing of your deed.

Frances E. Cooke.

THE FIRST STEP.

BY SHERWOOD MAY.

CLIVE SPENCER had one fault that gave his parents increasing anxiety as he grew older. He was known as an "odd stick;" and his elder friends said, "What a pity that Clive should be so eccentric! What will he become if he keeps on?"

Now, the real truth was this: He had rather a contempt for the ordinary and conventional ways of doing things, and liked to shock and startle people by tactless remarks and blunt criticisms. He was fond also of doing things in peculiar and noticeable ways, just from a foolish desire to show his own independence.

One morning old Miss Askerton called to spend the day with Clive's mother, as was her custom once or twice a month. Now, Miss Askerton was old and tiresome, full of aches and ails, and a never-failing capacity for recounting her miseries. Mrs. Spencer was not so glad as usual to see her, for it was to be a busy, trying day. Still she welcomed her very kindly, settled her in the easiest chair, and left the room to attend to her little daughter Daisy, who was having a crying spell in the nursery. Clive sauntered into the room, greeted the visitor coldly, and said, "You have come in an unfortunate time, Miss Askerton. Mother is to be very busy today, and was hoping no one would come." Poor Miss Askerton got up trembling with anger, put on her bonnet and shawl, and left the house.

Clive, rather frightened at the effect of his words, hurried off to school, and Mrs. Spencer was much astonished, on returning from the nursery, to find her parlour empty. She suspected Clive to be the cause, and was much disturbed when her questioning brought out the facts.

"I only told the truth. You know you didn't want her," was his grumbling excuse.

"The truth isn't to be spoken at all times," said his mother, severely. "I would rather have endured any annoyance than to feel that this poor lady has been insulted in my house. You are not a gentleman, Clive, for you don't know how to mind your own business, and are rude besides."

This was a hard remark for Mamma Spencer to make, and her son winced under it. For a while after he was more careful; but the habit was not so easily broken, and soon returned upon him again. He went to his cousin Mabel's party in his old school-suit, and when remonstrated with remarked that "his clothes were good enough, and that he didn't see why he should make a peacock of himself just because all the others did." He liked to go without his overcoat on intensely cold days, and affected a disgust of all the amusements that others found pleasant. "Tennis is only fit for donkeys," he remarked before Mr. Rodman Chase one day. Now, Mr. Chase was not a brilliant young man, as every one knew; but he was modest, unselfish, and kind, and better liked by far than conceited Clive Spencer. He was sensitive over his deficiencies, however, and Clive's remark gave him a great many uncomfortable thoughts.

So Clive went on making enemies and taxing his friends' patience to the utmost.

When the concert season came Mr. Spencer purchased two tickets, and every other night Clive was allowed to accompany his mother. One night when his father was to go the boy was most anxious to attend also. Finally, Mr. Spencer said, "You may get an admission ticket, and perhaps after the first few numbers you may find some unoccupied seat."

Clive bought his ticket, and stood for some time after the concert began. There were two unoccupied seats near him, one of which was finally appropriated by an old gentleman after the opening overture. Clive was about to take the other, when a young lady passed in front of him and secured the prize. Just then an evil impulse came to the lad—a kind of audacious daring. He wondered if he could really get the seat on false pretences, and how it would seem to succeed in so strange an undertaking. He stepped up to the lady, bowed, and looked inquiringly at her as much as to say, "You are in my seat, madam." The lady arose quickly; "Pardon me," she said, "if I have appropriated your seat; I will go immediately"—which she did, and the young reprobate settled himself comfortably, preparing to enjoy himself, half frightened and wholly elated at the success of his scheme.

But his satisfaction was of short duration. A hand was laid upon his shoulder and a low firm voice said, "These are my seats, and I insist that you get up at once." Turning he saw a fine-looking woman, richly dressed, who held two season-tickets in her hand, with the numbers of the seats conspicuously printed on them. Behind her was the young lady whom Clive had so meanly driven from her place. He got up, his face on fire; the old gentleman followed him. The ladies settled themselves, and Clive heard the elder remark, "I am glad I ran across you just when I had the spare ticket. If I had only known in

time it would not have been necessary for you to buy the admission ticket. I am sorry that rude boy imposed so upon you."

Clive heard the remark and the little laugh that followed from the row of by-standers. He left the place, and went home full of disgust and mortification. His love of the startling and sensational had led him into deceit, and Clive prided himself on being an honest lad.

For some time after, Clive was more careful, but as the days went by the memory of his mortification grew dimmer, and he was as headstrong as ever.

The Spencers went to Chyne Lake for the summer, and among the boarders at the hotel Clive recognised to his horror the young lady whom he had imposed upon at the concert. She was introduced to the Spencers as Miss Jessie Rogers, and Clive lived in constant fear lest she should recognise him, and tell of his discourtesy. To his great relief, however, she treated him as if she had never seen him before, and his mind grew easier.

It may readily be supposed that Clive's odd ways did not add to his mother's comfort. "What shall I do with that boy?" she said one day to Miss Jessie as they sat sewing together.

"I'll tell you," said Miss Jessie, and a long confidential chat ensued.

Later in the day they all sat on the piazza overlooking the lake. Mamma and Miss Jessie and the girls were working, papa reading, and Clive lounging.

"What a fine-looking young man Mr. Gray is!" remarked Miss Jessie.

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Spencer, warmly; "he is so erect and well-proportioned. I would give anything if my Clive were so. He is too stout to suit my ideas of beauty."

Clive flushed, but was too amazed to speak.

"Yes," went on sister Pen, "it would require a brilliant imagination to make out my brother a beauty. Have you noticed how he squints?"

"His squinting is nothing to his nose," remarked Flossy, demurely. "I do not wish to seem wildly reckless in my statements, but I think I never saw quite so turn-up a nose as Clive's."

"Well, I think you're all polite!" burst out Clive. "Perhaps you forget my presence here?"

"Oh, no," said papa, cuttingly; "but we're all truthful people here, and we like to free our minds once in a while."

"I can't say much for Clive's manners," went on Miss Jessie, serenely. "You remember, Mrs. Spencer, what I told you about his rudeness to me at the concert last winter."

Clive could stand no more. He rushed away, feeling as if he could never see his cruel family again. However, the pangs of hunger drove him back to their society once more; but he preserved a dignified silence during all the tea-time.

After tea Miss Jessie beckoned to him. "I am going for a walk," she said, "and I should like your company."

"Excuse me; I have another engagement," he said, grandly.

"Oh, no; your mother said you were to go. I asked her before tea," replied Miss Jessie, coolly.

"Now I'm in for it," thought the unhappy youth as he went to get his hat.

It was a lovely walk, down the Lake road, under the softly flushing sunset skies. Jessie chatted easily and pleasantly, but Clive was very sober.

"Clive, dear, I suppose you think we were very hard on you this afternoon," she said, softly.

Clive's face twitched, and he turned away to hide the gathering tears.

"I can't help it if I am ugly," he muttered.

"But you can help being conceited and sarcastic," was the gentle reply. "Now, Clive, I have heard you say just as sharp things to others. You see how it feels. Do you suppose anybody minds a plain face if real gentleness and unselfishness lie behind it? You're not a bad fellow at heart, Clive, but you think too exclusively of self. You like to be odd, to say rude things, to shock, startle, and wound others. Now, my boy, when the best persons feel that certain things are for the comfort and good of society at large we may be sure they are right. We cannot run against all the little conventionalities and think ourselves finely frank and independent. It is more often a brutal selfishness that prompts such disregard of others. I have watched you, Clive, and I think you have the making of a man in you. But now you are only a rude, selfish, conceited goose of a boy, who thinks himself wiser than his elders and all society combined. Think of it, Clive. Is it not so? Haven't you fewer friends than most boys, because of these faults? You are provoked with me now, but you will think it over, and see that I am right. Remember, my boy, that the first step away from the accepted standards of right is almost always a downward one. It led you to a deceit you did not realise at first. Think it over, and let the man in you conquer."

And Clive did "think it over," and from that hour of mortification a real reform was begun. The boy had indeed seen himself as others saw him, and he resolved to follow this first step by a genuine change of heart and life.